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CONFIDENTIAL 11 June 1965

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Dissemination Control Branch, DD/CR

FROM : Chief, Publications Staff, ORR

SUBJECT : **Release of CIA/RR GM 65-3, China's Border with the USSR Manchuria, May 1965, Secret, to Foreign Governments**

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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

CIA/RR GM 65-3
May 1965

CHINA'S BORDER WITH THE USSR

MANCHURIA

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND REPORTS

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CHINA'S BORDER WITH THE USSR: MANCHURIA

The eastern 2,300-mile sector of the 4,150-mile China - USSR boundary* separates the Soviet Far East and a portion of eastern Siberia from that part of China traditionally known as Manchuria.** Although much of this long boundary passes through sparsely populated hills and desolate swamps, the frontier region has economic and strategic importance: the Trans-Siberian Railroad parallels the border and serves as the vital lifeline for the isolated economic areas and military installations of the Soviet Far East; rail connections between the Trans-Siberian and the Chinese rail net in Manchuria provide an important link for trade in Chinese goods; and sizable, though largely undeveloped, agricultural, mineral, forest, and water resources exist in the frontier region.

The Manchuria - USSR boundary, except for the extreme western segment and the segment south of Lake Khanka, near Vladivostok, follows the courses of the Amur and Ussuri Rivers and certain of their tributaries. The border terrain is relatively low, with generally forested hills that are interspersed with numerous marsh-lined river valleys and poorly drained plains. Large plains with extensive marshes occur on the Soviet side along the middle Amur and in China in the great triangular lowland formed by the lower Sungari and Ussuri Rivers joining the Amur.

Chinese and Soviet maps differ slightly in their portrayal of certain border sections, but until recently the Manchuria - USSR border commonly was regarded as stable, settled, and unlikely to be a contentious issue between the two great powers. The deepening of the dispute between China and the USSR, however, led in 1963 to a public airing of border issues and grievances, including the Chinese charge that "unequal treaties" were the basis for the present delineation of the boundary. Border talks were initiated early in 1964 but were broken off after several months without settling the issue.

Historical Background

Originally, the vast Amur-Ussuri forest-and-swamp country was sparsely populated by Tungusic peoples whose livelihood depended on the products of forest and river. Early in the 17th century these scattered Amur-Ussuri tribes, under the leadership of a chieftain named Nurhachi, were united with more numerous groups of similar race and culture who inhabited central and southeastern Manchuria. Collectively termed the Manchus, these Tungusic tribes in alliance with other groups overthrew the Ming dynasty of China and established the Ch'ing, or Manchu, dynasty in 1644.

The rise of the Manchus coincided with Russian expansion eastward into the vast Siberian territories. By 1644 the Russians had entered and explored the Amur Valley, and soon after that they built forts and settled colonists in the valley. Inevitably, conflict with the Manchus occurred; and it continued until the signing of the Treaty of Nerchinsk in 1689. The treaty delimited the Russo-Chinese border so as to include within the Manchu Empire most of the Amur Basin and all of the Ussuri territory. The Treaty of Kiakhta, signed in 1727, defined the remainder of the Manchuria border, the part west of the Argun headwaters.

The Amur-Ussuri region was part of Manchu China for 170 years, and conditions changed very little during that time. Large areas remained unpopulated, and north of the Amur there were only a handful of Manchu settlements. During much of the period the border defense was centered at Tsitsihar, well within present-day Manchuria. The Russian czars continued to covet the Amur-Ussuri territories, but Manchu strength dictated caution rather than confrontation. British victory in the Opium Wars (1839-42), however, exposed Manchu decay and opened China to extensive sea trade, thus threatening the favored Russian overland trading relationship with China. Russian expeditions into Manchu territory were organized, and by 1850, the Russian flag had been hoisted on the Amur. Settlements were built soon after, and troops and officials moved in -- all in clear violation of the Treaty of Nerchinsk. The Manchus were in no position to oppose the audacious Russians, and the fait accompli was formalized in 1858 by the signing of the Treaty of Aigun, which allocated to Russia the entire left bank of the Amur with the exception of an area of Manchu settlement south of Blagoveshchensk that came to be known as the "64 villages." The territory east of the Ussuri was to be under joint ownership until the boundary could be demarcated. This unclear status of the Ussuri territory was resolved in 1860 by the Treaty of Peking, whereby the territory east of the Ussuri was ceded to the Russians. This additional territorial booty was extracted from the Manchus during the confused period of Anglo-French attacks on China and the subsequent Anglo-French occupation of Peking in 1860. By the 1858 Treaty of Aigun and the 1860 Treaty of Peking the Russians acquired slightly more than 300,000 square miles of territory, including the valuable harbor of Vladivostok, as well as important trading concessions.

Russia was an enthusiastic participant in the dismemberment of the Manchu Empire in the decades following the Treaty of Peking. The Russians obtained mining rights and lumber concessions in Manchuria; obtained the right to build and operate a railroad across Chinese territory, thus shortening the trip to Vladivostok; leased the Port Arthur - Dairen area; and for some time after the Boxer Rebellion of 1900, militarily occupied most of Manchuria. In retaliation for Manchu attacks on Blagoveshchensk, the Russians forced Manchu settlers and their families in the "64 villages" to cross the Amur River, causing the death of most of them. Russian designs in southern Manchuria were blocked by their defeat in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05), but later Russo-Japanese agreements, both open and secret, recognized a Russian sphere of influence in northern Manchuria. After the Soviet regime came to power, czarist actions in Manchuria and Manchurian concessions extracted from China were formally renounced. Later, however, actions contradicted words. Frictions developed which in 1929 erupted in military clashes that were generated by the inability to agree on the control of the Chinese Eastern Railroad. Soviet ambitions were dampened by the Japanese occupation of Manchuria in 1931, but after Japan's defeat in World War II, they were revived by the 1945 Sino-Soviet agreement that established Sino-Soviet joint ownership of the two main Manchurian railroads and joint use of the naval base at Port Arthur.

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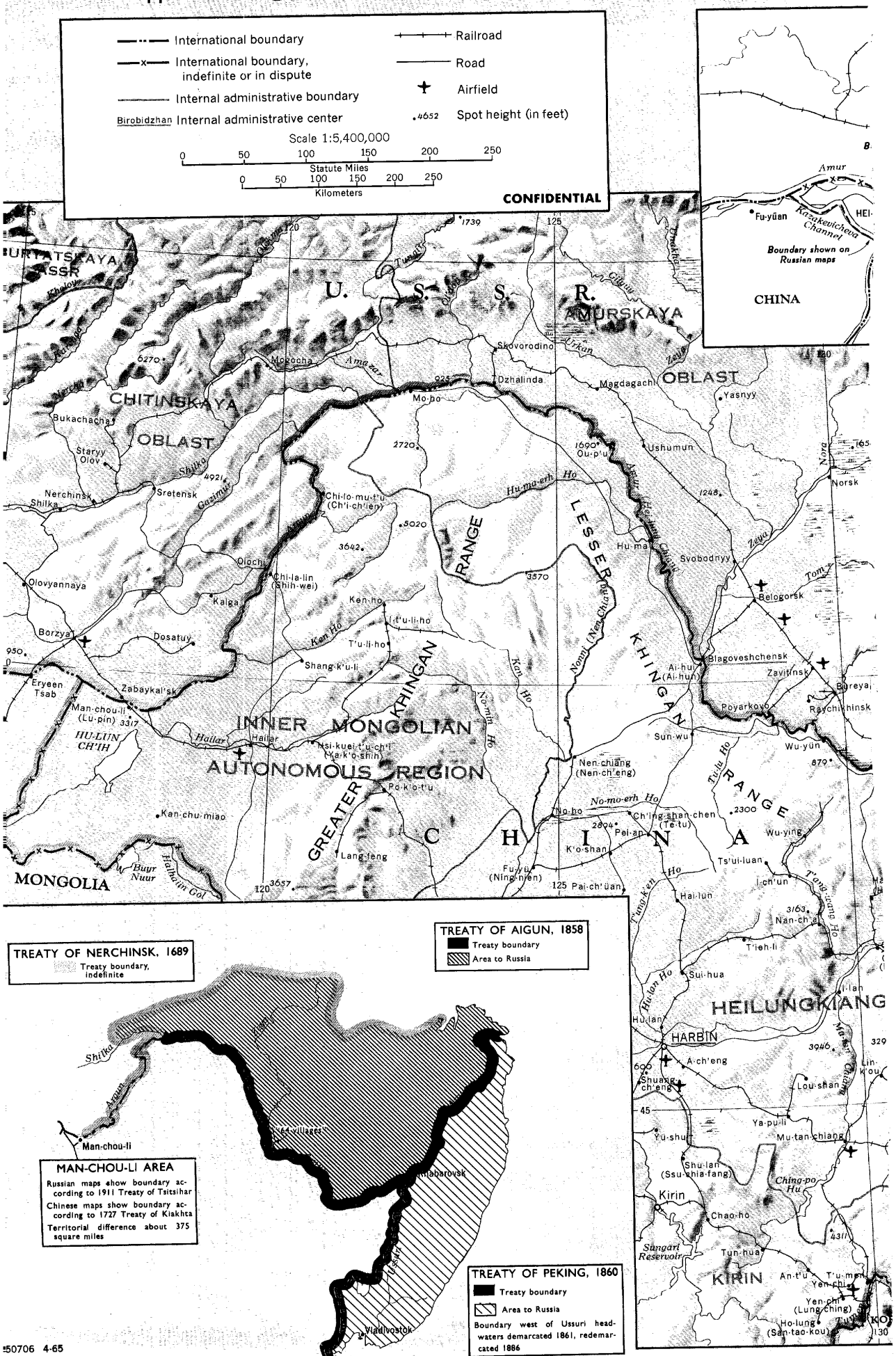
* The western sector of the China - USSR border is discussed in CIA/RR GM 64-1, China's Border with the USSR: Sinkiang, February 1964, S/NO FOREIGN DISSEM.

** Administratively, Manchuria is divided into an eastern portion comprised of three provinces (Heilungkiang, Kirin, and Liaoning), collectively called "The Northeast" by the Chinese Communists, and a western portion that is part of the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region.

CHINA-U.S.S.R. BORDER, EASTERN SE(



TREATY OF NERCHINSK, 1689

Treaty boundary, indefinite

TREATY OF AIGUN, 1858

Treaty boundary

Area to Russia

MAN-CHOU-LI AREA

Russian maps show boundary according to 1911 Treaty of Tsitsihar

Chinese maps show boundary according to 1727 Treaty of Kiakhta

Territorial difference about 375 square miles

TREATY OF PEKING, 1860

Treaty boundary

Area to Russia

Boundary west of Ussuri headwaters demarcated 1861, redemarcated 1886

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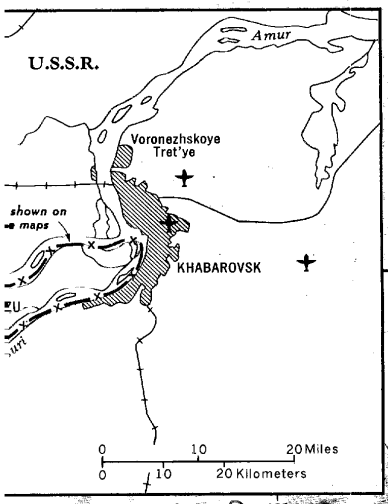

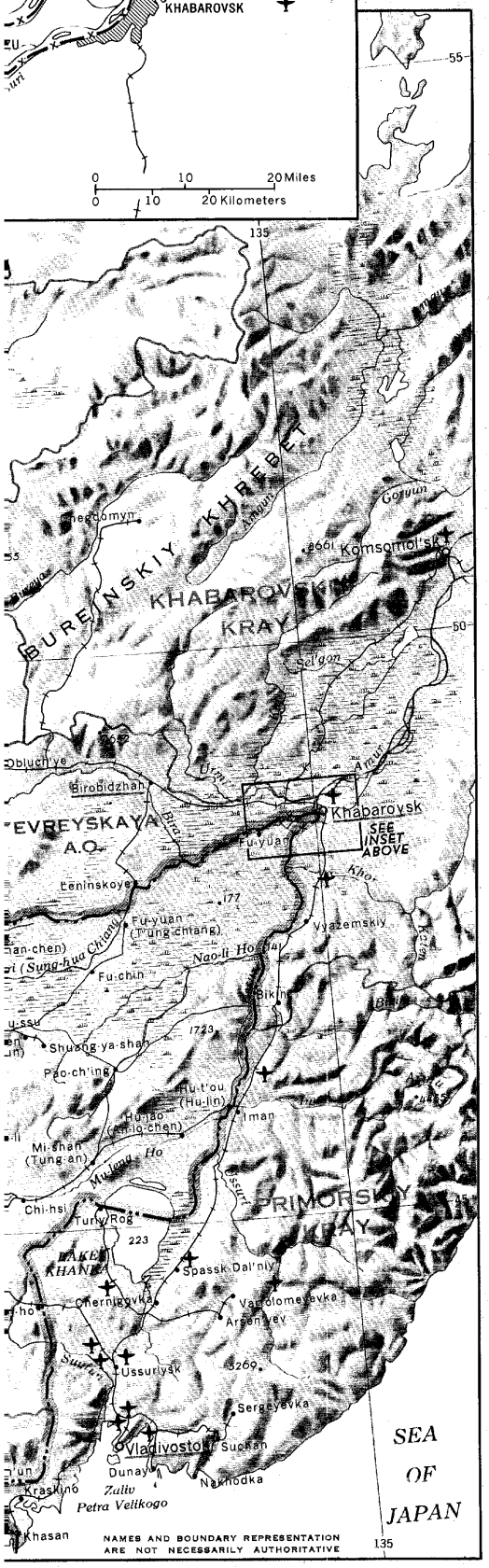

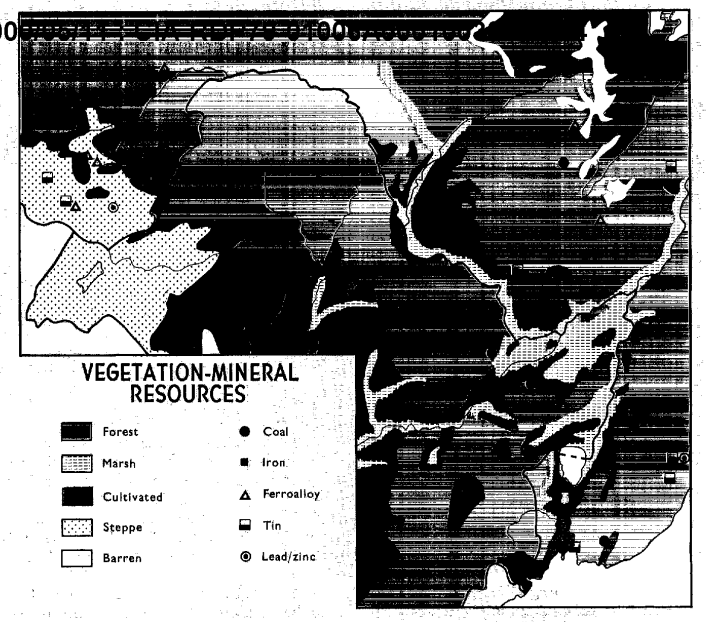

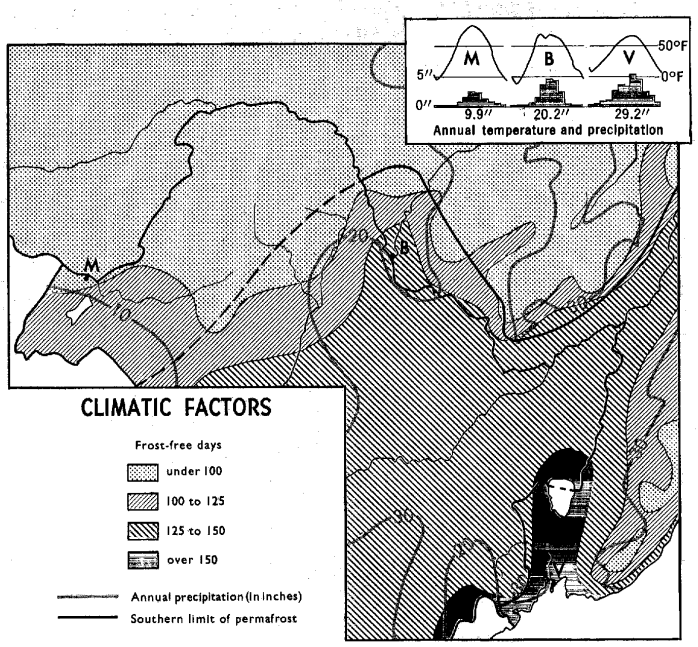

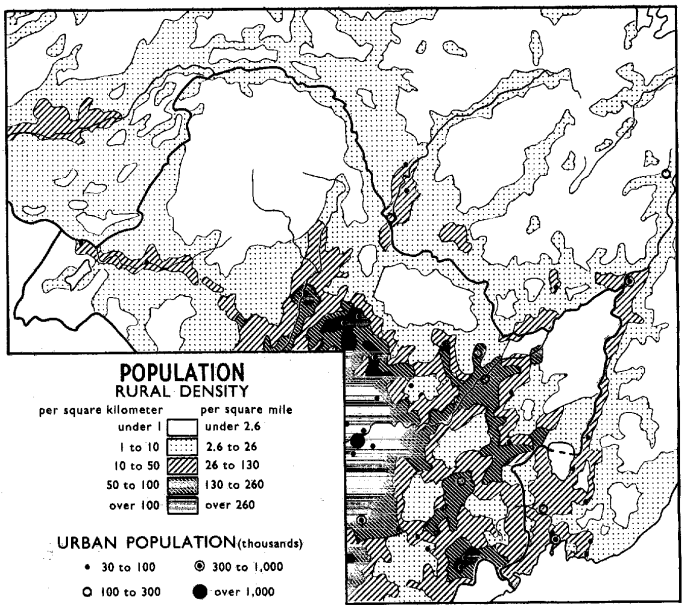

The USSR has viewed the border talks as a means of solving a comparatively minor problem and as being necessary only because certain ambiguous points of boundary definition needed clarification. In the Soviet view, presumably, the end result would involve no significant territorial exchange but would prevent, through modern surveys and the placing of new boundary markers, future misunderstandings concerning the boundary alignment. In contrast, the Chinese view the talks and the border issue primarily in the larger context of the Sino-Soviet dispute. The publicity given to Russian imperialism in the frontier region has proven politically useful to the Chinese as an instrument to further their objectives in the continuing polemical dispute. China hardly expects to regain through negotiation the extensive territories of the Manchu Empire that were "lost" through treaty, nor have the Chinese yet made a serious claim to them, but the Chinese apparently believe that publicizing the border issue is in their political interest.

There has been no evidence of a major military buildup along either side of the frontier, but border security measures have been tightened since 1963 and a higher state of military readiness is believed to prevail now. The USSR has maintained sizable military forces and installations, both ground and air, along the frontier ever since the Japanese occupation of Manchuria. Several divisions are currently deployed in the Vladivostok-Ussuriysk area, another division to the north near Belogorsk, and three divisions or so in the vicinity of Borzya. The headquarters for the Transbaykal and Far East Military Districts are located at Chita and Khabarovsk, respectively. Actual control of the border is handled by border security units, which operate under the aegis of the Committee for State Security, the KGB. Recently the border guard units have been strengthened by the addition of helicopters and tank units.

Large Chinese military forces are located in the Mukden Military Region, which includes most of Manchuria. Three Chinese armies have their headquarters in the triangle formed by Ch'ang-chun, Harbin, and Mu-tan-chiang. Other armies are located in southern Manchuria. During 1962-63, the Chinese greatly expanded the number of border defense stations manned by Public Security troops that are part of the border security branch of the Ministry of Public Security. The increased strength of the border security forces of both countries probably is evidence not only of heightened concern but also of increased efforts to secure information about each other's intentions.

Prospects

The initiative for reaching a border settlement appears to rest with the Chinese, who, in spite of their stated desire to reach an agreement, continue to talk about unequal treaties and the loss of vast territories. In similar situations -- for example, negotiations over the Burma - China border and the Pakistan - China border, in which political gains could be foreseen -- the Chinese adopted a "reasonable" attitude, and boundary settlements were reached quickly. In Manchuria, however, the territorial issue has provided valuable polemical ammunition and has enabled the Chinese, both publicly and privately, to embarrass the USSR. The USSR probably will try to confine any future border talks to clarifying minor discrepancies in boundary alignment and to countering Chinese statements by publicizing the unreasonableness of the Chinese, in the Soviet view, and their apparent unwillingness to discuss the issues seriously. Given the current state of Sino-Soviet relations, a continuation of the disagreement over the border appears to be likely.

Approved For Release 2000/05/11 : CIA-RDP79-01006A000100390001-4

The triumph of the Chinese Communists in 1949 appeared to herald a new era of Sino-Russian relations in Manchuria. Treaties between the USSR and Nationalist China that had been signed immediately after World War II were abrogated, and new agreements that provided for the gradual withdrawal of Soviet influence in Manchuria were signed. By 1955, Soviet troops had departed from the Port Arthur area, which they had occupied since 1945; jointly operated Manchurian railroads were returned to sole Chinese administration; and Soviet shares in joint stock companies set up in Manchuria were transferred to China. Potential causes for border friction seemingly were lessened by an agreement reached in 1951, which concerned navigation regulations and procedures on the Amur-Ussuri waterways, and by another agreement in 1958 that provided for free navigation by merchant ships of boundary rivers, including the lower Amur and Sungari Rivers. Cooperation in the border area was highlighted by the 1956 Sino-Soviet agreement on a joint survey of the resources and development of the Amur Basin. During this first decade of the Chinese Communist regime the Soviet press described the Amur and Ussuri as "rivers of friendship."

Economic Development

Development of the Manchuria - USSR frontier region has differed quite markedly on opposite sides of the border, the differences relating, in part, to location and distance factors. The Soviet Far East, physically isolated by great distances from the major Soviet productive areas and strategically vulnerable to any hostile power based in Manchuria, has been forced to develop some degree of economic self-sufficiency. In contrast, the Manchurian borderlands are relatively undeveloped, largely because this area is peripheral to the more productive and more accessible lands in central and southern Manchuria that even today are not fully exploited.

Large-scale settlement of the frontier did not begin until after the completion in 1904 of the Trans-Siberian Railroad and the Chinese Eastern Railroad across Manchuria. The population density now is notably higher on most of the Soviet side of the border than on the Chinese side; in size the numerous towns and cities strung along the Trans-Siberian Railroad range upward to about 300,000 inhabitants, the population of Khabarovsk and of Vladivostok. Much of the reclaimable land on the Soviet side has been drained and cleared and is under cultivation. On the Chinese side the population density is generally lower and relatively little land is cultivated. Frontier towns are scattered and small, except for Man-chou-li, which has a population of possibly 70,000. At greater distances from the border, however, several Chinese cities have grown rapidly in recent years, principally because of mining and lumbering activities. Ethnically, the great majority of the inhabitants of the frontier region are either Chinese or Russian. Significant minority groups include Mongols, who predominate within Manchuria from the upper Argun area west to the Mongolian border -- although the two major cities in this region, Man-chou-li and Hailar, are solidly Chinese; Koreans, who inhabit the lowlands near Hun-ch'un and Mi-shan in China and near Bikin in the USSR; and Jews in and around Birobidzhan. Ukrainian settlements are scattered along the Amur and Ussuri Rivers on the Soviet side. A few small pockets of Tungusic peoples of several different tribes are still found in the region, generally located in isolated wooded areas. Most of these people make a living by hunting and fishing.

The Trans-Siberian Railroad has been and is now the vital surface-transportation link between the Soviet Far East and other areas of the USSR. Along the Amur the railroad parallels the river at distances of 50 miles or less; and along the Ussuri south of Khabarovsk it is generally 10 miles or less from the river. Waterways are important movers of freight, and shallow-draft vessels can use all of the Amur River and part of its tributary, the Shilka. The shipping season on these rivers is relatively short (about 160 to 175 days), normally lasting from late May till early November. The season on the Ussuri, which is not used as much, is a little longer. Roads are few and serve mostly as feeders to rail and water transport. The Man-chou-li to Sui-fen-ho railroad via Harbin, originally built as part of the Trans-Siberian system, is the most important means of transportation serving the Chinese frontier. Several lines extend north or east from it, primarily to serve mining or logging centers. Old lines to Ai-hun in the north and Hu-lin in the east that were built by the Japanese are in the process of reconstruction. Most shipping on the boundary rivers is Russian; Chinese shipping is confined largely to the Sungari River, with Harbin and Chia-mu-ssu the important rail transshipment points for cargo moving to and from the Amur region. Since 1963, river ships reportedly have been careful not to cross midchannel on the boundary rivers. As few good roads exist in the frontier area, waterways commonly serve as roads during winter. The thick ice makes sledging and the use of vehicles practicable. The feeder roads also can handle greater amounts of traffic in winter than in summer, when many roads become impassable at times because of mud and flooding.

Agriculture is locally important in the Soviet Far East, largely concentrated in the Zeya-Bureya and Khanka-Ussuri lowlands, but production is insufficient to meet regional needs. In Manchuria only 2 or 3 percent of the land in the hsien (counties) adjacent to the border is now cultivated, and the availability of extensive areas of arable land has favored large-scale farming operations. During the past 10 years a number of state farms, military resettlement farms, and a few tractor stations have been established in Manchuria. The number of military resettlement farms set up near the border during the past 2 or 3 years suggests that they may support border defense forces. Agricultural land in the entire frontier region could be expanded greatly, particularly on the Manchurian side of the border, but most of it is poorly drained and considerable investment would be needed to initiate drainage and reclamation projects. Other drawbacks to agricultural expansion include long, bitterly cold winters, relatively short (100 to 150 days) frost-free seasons, precipitation that is often inadequate during periods of spring sowing and early crop growth, and occasional flooding. Wheat and other grains, including a little rice, are the major food crops; soybeans are the principal industrial crop. The presence of dairying and cattle raising as well as a greater emphasis on root crops such as potatoes distinguishes agricultural patterns in the USSR from those in China. In the drier western part of the frontier, farming is relatively unimportant and nomadic herding is the principal economic activity.

Most of the frontier region is forested with a mixture of needleleaf and broadleaf species. In China, the extensive larch and pine forests in the remote parts of the Great and Lesser Khinghan Ranges are the last major timber reserves. The timber cut in these areas serves both regional and national requirements. In the timber-rich USSR, however, the frontier forests are only regionally important, sufficient for industrial and other local needs and for export in small quantities.

Significant quantities of coal are mined by both countries, and recent surveys indicate that a variety of other minerals and metals of importance occurs in the frontier region. Chinese production of coal in Heilungkiang is 6 or 7 percent of the Chinese national total, and Soviet fields near Blagoveshchensk and Vladivostok are regionally important to the relatively small but expanding Far East industrial district. Although a little gold is mined, coal mining is the only mining activity of any significance in the Chinese frontier region. In the USSR, however, a little iron ore and various nonferrous and alloy metals are mined in the western part of the frontier region, and tin is mined at several locations in the east.

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A joint Sino-Soviet communique of August 1956 announced the undertaking of a cooperative investigation and study of the resource base of the Amur Basin. The potential for power and navigation was assessed, and other natural resources were surveyed and mapped and recommendations were made for their utilization. As a result, several sites on the Amur have been selected for hydroelectric powerplants and plans have been made for flood-control measures and the improvement and extension of navigation. The Sino-Soviet dispute, however, apparently has halted implementation of any plans for joint development of resources in the basin. Most of the immediate benefit from any development schemes along the Amur would accrue to the economically more advanced USSR.

Territorial Issues

The Aigun (1858) and Peking (1860) treaties left unsettled the ownership of the numerous islands in the boundary rivers. Most troublesome is the large triangular island area called Hei-hsia-tzu (or San'tseyaochzhou) located at the confluence of the Amur and Ussuri Rivers. At times the area, about 25 miles long and some 15 miles wide at the western end, appears to be a single island, with a poorly drained surface and numerous channels or bayous. At high water, however, these channels cut completely across Hei-hsia-tzu, and the area can more properly be described as consisting of several separate islands. The easternmost of such "islands" is the site of a small shipyard that is believed to be a subsidiary of one of the Khabarovsk shipyards. Past and present Chinese maps -- both Communist and Nationalist -- show Hei-hsia-tzu as part of China; Russian maps show it as within the USSR and depict the boundary as following the Kazakevicheva Channel at the extreme western end of the island. Generally, international river boundaries follow the deepest part of the main channel, and the ownership of islands is decided accordingly. Such practice would appear to allocate Hei-hsia-tzu to China. Whatever the legal merits of the dispute, the most important factor is the obvious strategic location of the island in relation to Khabarovsk: non-Soviet control of the island would be a threat to the security of the city and nearby installations.

Another source of contention is the 60-mile boundary segment of the Argun headwaters. This area is strategically significant because the change-of-gauge facilities between the Russian and Chinese rail systems are located at Man-chou-li, just inside the Chinese border. According to the Russian version of the boundary alignment, the boundary lies from 5 to 10 miles south of the alignment depicted by the Chinese, leaving about 375 square miles of territory between the two lines. Chinese maps show the boundary as defined by the 1727 Treaty of Kiakhta; Soviet maps show it as defined by the Tsitsihar Agreement, which was signed early in December 1911, by a moribund Manchu government. The legality of the agreement is dubious in that it was never ratified by any Chinese government. The Russian version of the boundary apparently has served as the de facto boundary ever since the Tsitsihar Agreement.*

Other segments of the boundary do not appear to present serious problems. In the west, Chinese and Russian maps differ slightly in their portrayal of the boundary along the upper Argun. The river is braided with numerous channels; Soviet maps show the boundary following the southernmost channel, and Chinese maps align it along the northern channel. During periods of high water, shifts in the main channel are common and problems arise. In the east, the Sino-Soviet border west and south of Lake Khanka follows various local terrain features to the boundary terminus at the Tumen River a few miles above its mouth. Boundary markers were erected in 1861 and again in 1886; plans to redemarcate the boundary during the 1920's were never implemented. During the 1930's, disputes arose between Japan and the USSR over this border segment and resulted in two border clashes. In part the clashes were due to the unclear location of the boundary on the ground. In many areas the boundary follows no easily recognizable terrain features, and the boundary markers are widely spaced; some may have disappeared. Thus, there is a possibility of differences arising in any redemarcation of the eastern and western segments of the boundary.

Recent Negotiations and Border Developments

The increasingly harsh polemical exchanges that in the early 1960's succeeded the euphoric phase of Sino-Soviet relations at first contained no hint of disagreement over the border. The Soviet press, however, since 1958 had occasionally made oblique references to border tension by publicizing "the work of the gallant frontier guards in the Far East," "the need for vigilance," and "the apprehension of border violators." By 1962, defectors from China reported a tightening of border security and the establishment of restricted zones along the frontier.

The first official publicity given to Sino-Soviet border issues occurred in an editorial in the Chinese People's Daily of 8 March 1963, in which the Chinese charged that "unequal treaties," including the Aigun and Peking treaties, had been forced on China. The Chinese also announced that at some unspecified future date China might wish to recognize, repudiate, revise, or renegotiate these earlier agreements. Soviet rejoinders claimed that the Chinese had been systematically violating the USSR border, citing some 5,000 violations in 1962 alone and specifically mentioning islands in the Amur and Ussuri. The USSR also accused the Chinese of not accepting offers to hold consultations to define certain border sections and further warned China of the dangers of inflaming nationalistic passions over territorial problems; Chinese retorts continued to stress the "unequal" nature of the border agreements.

Although the public diatribe continued throughout most of 1963, during that year the USSR and China agreed privately that border talks would be initiated. The talks were begun quietly in February 1964 with the dispatch to Peking of a working-level Soviet delegation, but little specific information is available about the discussions. Diplomatic sources indicate that the talks came to naught. They were broken off in August 1964, ostensibly over the failure to agree as to the ownership of Hei-hsia-tzu. The Chinese case for ownership of the island area appears to coincide with the intent of the treaties and with geographic logic. Strong Soviet interests are involved, however, because of a Soviet installation on part of the island area and, more importantly, because hostile control of Hei-hsia-tzu would have potentially serious military and security implications.

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* The difference between the alignment of the boundary according to the Treaty of Kiakhta and the alignment according to the Tsitsihar Agreement is best shown on Sheet NM 50-8 of the Army Map Service Series L542, scale 1:250,000. On this map the first alignment is indicated as that of the Abagutuy Treaty of 12 October 1727, which was confirmed by the Treaty of Kiakhta on 21 October 1727.